

S2263

P4

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 005 863 428 1

Conservation Resources

Lig-Free® Type I

Ph & S. Bufford

13
754

A REVIEW

OF MR. LONGFELLOW'S

EVANGELINE.

FROM

THE AMERICAN REVIEW

FOR FEBRUARY, 1848.

Ms. A. 1. 2. 3.

1848

CC 216 143
10
14

1811 157244

10 A

1811 157244



EVANGELINE.*

POETRY, or rather *the poetic*, is a theme which must be forever re-discussed and re-defined, since it is a matter upon which the uneducated and unreflecting must ever refer to their own individual impressions. Like the divine institution of Christianity, it adapts itself to all hearts and all capacities. There is none so stockish, hard, and full of rage, but poetry may for the time change his nature: the wildest savage has his chants and dances, and though when they are translated to us there is nothing poetic perceptible in them, yet they shall, to him, be poetry. The Chinese have their poems, as well as we ours; but, with the perverseness appertaining to most traits of character in our celestial antipodes, what they consider elegant poetic writing, we should class with the maxims of poor Richard. "Keaou Seen Sang," says the Rev. Mr. Smith, a late traveller, "seemed to revel in a paradise of self-complacency, as we sat to listen to his magniloquent intonations of the classics. The impassioned gesture and literary enthusiasm of Keaou, would have led us to believe that his mental enjoyment was very great, and the ideas conveyed by the composition very sublime. But, on translating the immortal fragment, it was frequently found to consist of some such sentiment as these: 'He who makes just agreements, can fulfill his promises; he who behaves with reverence and propriety, puts shame and disgrace to a distance; he who loses not the friendship of those whom he ought to treat with kindness and respect, may be a master.'" These are very sensible worldly maxims, but they are certainly not much more poetic to us than "Time is money," "An honest man's the noblest work of God," or any of the points and antitheses which may occur in poetry, and belong to it, but can exist without it—the pure products of the raised intellect. So, if we are content to

seek nearer than China for an illustration, we may discern that what is poetry to one is not so to another; for who has not seen eyes suffused by the recitation of ballads of the most silly character possible? Political elections often engender serious poems of this sort. The Miller doctrine was a myth that gave birth to hymns at once lofty and laughable. The temple of the Mormons, no doubt, echoed to the songs of bards.

In the multitude of tastes between these extreme productions and those of Shakspeare and Milton, there can never be a *consensus omnium* as to the true definition of POETRY, any more than there can be among artists as to what are the requisites of HIGH ART. There is, however, a constant tendency towards such an unanimous agreement, as generations rise up from youth to age, through the experience of passion and the growth of reason. It is very well settled that the names we have just mentioned stand at the head of our poetic literature. Some college students prefer Byron—others Tennyson; Milton they almost universally consider very pedantic and dry; and although they cannot but admit there are some humorous characters in Shakspeare, they would rather see him on the stage than read him. As they grow up into life, however, if they continue (as, alas! but few of them do in our spreading country,) to love literary studies, they see more and more of the greatness of these wonderful men, and acquiesce more and more in the general verdict of the world. Thus the process forever goes on, the pure art of poetry standing before the race like a pillar of fire, seen by all, but seen best by those who are in the van, or now and then seen best of all by the far-reaching eye of genius.

There was one not many years ago that saw it, as it would seem, in its very purity;

who had approached, with his self-consciousness all awake, into its empyreal circle, and could define its form and fix its qualities and limits—COLERIDGE, the most poetic of philosophers, and the most profound and candid of critics. His mind seemed peculiarly formed to be at once the exhibiter and expounder of the highest forms of poetry; he could assume the lyric frenzy, and could analyze it also; he not only wooed the pure muse successfully, but without losing his own heart; he united, in short, in one person, the rarest qualities of artist and critic, actor and reflector, doer and observer. The definition of poetry he has given in his *Biographia Literaria*, and especially in the volume containing the immortal criticism of Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads, is one whose excellence appeals to a man's individual growth in the same manner with that of all the great models of art, viz.: it grows better by time, and is more understood the more it is studied. Few persons in active life have leisure to read Coleridge; indeed, it is questionable whether his peculiar, minutely guarded, yet eloquent, philosophical style should be recommended to young persons engaged in active literary or professional pursuits; he is a writer who were perhaps better left to those who cannot avoid him. Any such one who may have fancied that he fully comprehended the distinctions in the definition we are speaking of several years ago, will probably find on re-reading the passage, ample argument for modesty in the retrospection. And this will arise, not from a certain theory's wedding itself to his mind and confining it to a particular track, but simply from his own personal experience of life; he will understand them better, as he does his Milton and Shakespeare, not from their having educated him, but from his having grown older and thought and suffered more. It is our purpose to recur briefly to these distinctions and principles, culling out and explaining some of the most important of them, and then to apply them to the work under review.

In the first chapter of the second volume of the *Biographia*, a new edition of which has just been issued by the Messrs. Wiley & Putnam, after a short account of the origin of the Lyrical Ballads, the

author proceeds to explain his ideas, first, of a POEM, secondly, of POETRY itself, in *kind* and in *essence*. Of a poem he observes: *First*. That it must be in metre or rhyme, or both; it must have the superficial *form*. *Secondly*. Its *immediate purpose* must be the communication of pleasure. But, *thirdly*. "The communication of pleasure may be the object of a work not metrically composed, as in novels and romances. Would, then, the mere super-addition of metre, with or without rhyme, entitle these to the name of poems? The answer is, (and this distinction we italicize, that the reader may observe it carefully,) that *nothing can permanently please which does not contain in itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise*. If metre be super-added, all other parts must be made consonant with it. They must be such as to justify the perpetual and distinct attention to each part, which an exact correspondent recurrence of accent and sound are calculated to excite. The final definition, then, so deduced, may be thus worded: A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having *this* object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the *whole*, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part."

The discrimination here made seems to cover too much; for the gratification received from each part in a true poem must be such as is also compatible with the delight to be inspired by the whole; each must help each and all. But the philosopher does not overlook this in his next paragraph: "If a man chooses to call every composition a poem, which is rhyme, or measure, or both, I must leave his opinion uncontroverted. The distinction is at least competent to characterize the writer's intention. If it were subjoined, that the whole is likewise entertaining or affecting, as a tale, or a series of interesting reflections, I of course admit that this is another fit ingredient of a poem, and an additional merit. But if the definition sought for be that of a *legitimate* poem, I answer, it must be one, the parts of which mutually support and explain each other; all in their proportion harmonizing with, and support-

ing, the purpose and known influences of metrical arrangement. The philosophic critics of all ages coincide with the ultimate judgment of all countries, in equally denying the praises of a just poem, on the one hand, to a series of striking lines or distichs, each of which, absorbing the whole attention of the reader to itself, disjoins it from its context, and makes it a separate whole, instead of an harmonizing part; and on the other hand, to an unsustained composition, from which the reader collects rapidly the general result, unattracted by the component parts. The reader should be carried forward, not merely, or chiefly, by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution; but by the pleasurable activity of mind, excited by the attractions of the journey itself. Like the motion of a serpent, which the Egyptians made the emblem of intellectual power; or like the path of sound through the air; at every step he pauses, and half recedes, and, from the retrogressive movement, collects the force which again carries him onward. *Precipitandus est liber spiritus*, says Petronius Arbitrator, most happily. The epithet *liber*, here balances the preceding verb; and it is not easy to conceive more meaning, condensed in fewer words."

We have quoted largely this characteristic passage for its beautiful clearness and breadth and condensation of thought. But the definition, it must be remembered, is after all only of a *poem*, and is intended to distinguish that species of writing from *prose*. *Evangeline*, and many works far inferior to it, come indisputably within the definition. If we wish to examine what are the elements of a *great* poem, we shall find them in the succeeding and concluding paragraphs of the chapter, under the definition of *poetry*. Of course the excellence of a poem as a work of art must be determined by the manner in which it develops those elements. After the form, the question is, how far is the piece *poetic*? Or the examination might be reversely thus: after considering how far the piece is poetic, the only other question must be, how far is the form born of and consonant with the quality of the piece as poetry? For in poetry the form and the spirit are in reality inseparable, and the task of con-

sidering them apart, to which our minds are compelled by the infirmity of their constitution, while it is the only way by which we arrive at a clear understanding of the whole subject, leads necessarily through a labyrinth of distinctions in which it is hardly possible to thread one's way without errors.

We might now consider the *form* of *Evangeline*, and its general *keeping*, and its intellectual ability and merit as a work of taste; the definitions already given being, as we consider, for such an examination, the best standard. But as all these qualities should be subordinate to, and created by, *POETRY*, we must go still further into the matter abstractly before descending into particulars. Poetry is to all the other qualities what charity is to human abilities; without it all is "sounding brass." It is the father of all metres; all varieties of rhyme are but its outward limbs and flourishes. Let us abandon ourselves once more to the guidance of the adventurous explorer, whose soul lived in the tropics of passion, while at the same time his mind wandered clear and unchilled in the darkest and coldest zones of thought.

"What is poetry? is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet? that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other. For it is a distinction resulting from the poetic genius itself, which sustains and modifies the images, thoughts and emotions of the poet's own mind. The poet, described in *ideal* perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) *fuses*, each into each, by that *synthetic and magical power*, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of *imagination*. This power, first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, control, (*laxis effertur habenis*.) reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities; of sameness, with difference; of the general, with the concrete; the idea, with the image; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order; judgment ever awake, and steady self-possession, with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admira-

tion of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry."

"Finally, GOOD SENSE is the BODY of poetic genius, FANCY its DRAPERY, MOTION its LIFE, and IMAGINATION the SOUL, that is everywhere, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole."

To make this perfectly clear, it would be necessary to read, or rather study, the chapters in the preceding volume of the *Biographia*, leading to the discussion of the *esemplastic power*, up to the point where the author wisely writes himself a letter, advising him to proceed no further—a task we would recommend to none who are not already somewhat versed in metaphysical reading, and have not smattered away the original confidence in their ignorance, which is the surest guide to knowledge. Let us reverently endeavor to explain what he means by the *Imagination* which is the soul of poetic genius, and the *Fancy* which is its drapery. In common parlance these words are used interchangeably: here their meanings are widely different. If the important words in this final sentence are fully understood, we are under no apprehension of being unintelligible, when we speak of the genius of Mr. Longfellow.

What is meant by "good sense" is clear; we understand a vigilant presiding reason, having the common knowledge of the world in greater or less degree under its control: in some of our modern small poets *animal feeling* seems to take its place, and we then have poems very well sustained, very well clothed, moving very gracefully, but for all that extremely weak and nonsensical. What is meant by motion is also perfectly plain; but the other two words are less easily distinguished, and no man can understand them fully, unless he possesses them in a conscious degree himself, which very many do not. Let us go back to the concluding definitions in the first volume, already referred to:—"The IMAGINATION, then, I consider either as primary or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION, I hold to be the living power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM." That is to say, as we understand it, it is that first principle in the mind of man, which

enables him to say, "I exist;" over this the will has no control. "The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or, where this process is rendered impossible, yet still, at all events, it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*," etc. "FANCY, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definitives. The fancy is, indeed, no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space, and blended with, and modified by, that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE. But, equally with the ordinary memory, it must receive all its materials ready-made from the law of association."

In brief, it is to the imagination that we owe the *sustaining power* in poetry, and to the fancy its *imagery*. The imagination is the wing—the fancy, the plumage; that is, considering them as distinct qualities, like the "organs" of the phrenologist. But they unite in all proportions, and in all degrees of submission to the primary consciousness. Where the poet, in the open day, with the disappointments of the past, the distraction of the present, and the hopelessness of the future around him; with his judgment all awake, his memory stored with learning and his fancy teeming with images; can resolutely cast himself loose and abandon himself to a rapture that is feigned and yet real—that despises reason, yet never goes beyond it—that in short sets the whole of the faculties of his nature into intense activity—it is by the strength of his imagination that he is enabled to do it; and it is according as this faculty of his mind is put forth, that we feel his power. In some, it is exerted with less of the will than in others. Shakspeare's imagination carried him quite beyond consciousness, so that he utters the divinest songs without knowing it; Milton's had more of the dull clay to contend with, but then, with an Atlas-like strength, he bears the burden to the very sky. Coleridge himself is another splendid example of the power of the faculty he has analyzed. He must have had an

almost infinitely greater tenacity of conscious reason to overcome than ordinary men, yet when he does rise, how strong is his flight! He reminds one, though the reader will smile at the application, of what the French Lord says of Parolles, in *All's Well that Ends Well*: "Is it possible he should know what he is, and be that he is?" Like his own Albatross, he is an unwieldy bird; but when he is once on the wing, "thorough the fog," or on the good south wind, he wins his way with an unconquerable vigor.

Wherever this strength is put forth, and under whatever variety of obstacles, it never fails to be felt. It is indeed "the faculty divine." Whether exerted with more or less of learning, in poetry or prose, in writing or in any other art, or in actual life, it is at once perceived and its force measured according to its degree. It is the contact of soul with soul. In life, it is the essence of character. Men do not affect each other through dry intellect; it is not by argument alone that they sway each other; it is by the strength of the imagination. Some men have weak intellects combined with great force of character: it is almost miraculous what a power they will exert over those around them. In some this power develops itself, through a rough nature, in violence and impetuosity; in others it works smoothly. It makes the tunes, with which, in this jangled and discordant world, the spirits of men play upon each other. Some are sweet and tender, some rapid and harsh, some melting, others inspiring. In what but the imagination consists the subtle powers of great rulers? Mere force of will is not sufficient to account for it. We must estimate the souls even of such men as Napoleon by our own, and certainly all the power of will in the whole human family would never suffice to account for such phenomena, without the presence of that "synthetic and magical power" which ever "struggles to idealize and unify"—a power which, in such extreme cases, seems almost to deprive the soul of its free agency, and make the man a "child of destiny," while in reality it is the excess of liberty.

But the most lovely development of this Imagination, which is the soul's life, is in Poetry and the fine arts. Here it

acts not to gain, or primarily to overcome, but to *please*. Here it speaks through beautiful forms, and the delightful play of thoughts. It moves us, but at the same time enchains us. If it awes us it does not make us afraid, but merely quickens in us, for the moment, a kindred thrill. Only here, through poetry and art, is it that man to man is lovely and excellent; only here that his soul expands above the gross things of earth, and aspires to reach the original image of its Maker. The act of adoration is its highest exercise. To pray truly is not, though it should be one's duty to strive to make it so, an act for all times and places, nor is it to be accomplished easily, though to endeavor is all that is required of us. Hence the dim aisles of venerable churches, lofty music, and solemn ceremonies, are assistants to devotion, because they call off the Fancy from its ordinary scenes, and, by turning it to loftier ones, teach it to lead its elder sister the Imagination to retire into its secret closet and there worship the infinite Majesty of Heaven. Next to this exercise of the soul, there is no art in which it develops itself against more difficulty or with more irresistible power than in music. This art requires infinite learning and infinite physical education. It tasks both body and mind, at the very moment of imaginative rapture. The poet here must soar with his mind crowded to the utmost with mathematical symmetries, and his fingers literally, as well as figuratively, on the strings of his lyre. Hence it is an art in which the imagination is more wondrously near and present than in any other; and also, one in which the great masters are fewer than in any other, and the interval between them and their inferiors, wider. Were it not for this, that the composer can educate himself into such a habit that he can create a whole work in his mind alone, or pass and repass it at will across his fancy, as one may a movement that he has often heard, the productions of the great musical geniuses would be absolute miracles; as it is, the spiritual vigor stands before us more naked in this art than even in poetry. The power of Handel is felt more universally and at once, than that of Milton; many have admired the ever-active and graceful invention of Haydn, to whom Chaucer,

would be a mere antique; the qualities of Mozart are more instantly moving than those of Shakspeare; and it is easier to understand Beethoven than Coleridge. For the learning of the science supplies in music the place of "good sense" in poetry; and symmetry becomes more readily the habit of the mind than sense.

But poetry, if it is below music in intensity and rapidity, is above it, and above painting and sculpture, in universality. If in it the imaginative power is not so sudden, it is not, on the other hand, confined to so narrow a range. If it does not draw the spirit so near, it enables us to see more of it at a time. If it does not magnify so much, its field of vision is greater. For it is not limited to symmetries of ear-forms, or groups, figures, or views for the eye; it includes all forms and all thoughts. It "brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity." God be thanked for all these lovely arts, but most of all for this—the divinest of all!

Let us now descend from these abstract principles, and endeavor to apply them to *Evangeline*. But we must first inform the reader more particularly what the book is, than he could learn from the title-page, copied at the beginning of our article. That only informs him that it is a "tale of Acadie," which was the old French name for the peninsula that is now a part of Nova Scotia. The particular place where the story begins, is Grand Pré, a village of French settlers containing about a hundred families. The time is soon after the expedition against Louisburg. The interest chiefly depends on the misfortunes of the hero and heroine, Gabriel Lajeunesse and *Evangeline Bellefontaine*—either of whom, by the way, would have had shorter names had we been present at the christening. These two are betrothed and are soon to be married; but before they are so, some English ships come into the harbor with orders to break up the settlement and carry off the inhabitants, which is accordingly done. The wretched people are landed, some at one place, some at another, and are thus scattered throughout this country. *Evangeline* loses Gabriel, and the whole of the remainder of the tale is an account of her feelings and efforts to find him. At

one time she is going down the Mississippi on a cumbrous boat, while he is going up on a swift boat: she feels in her spirit that he is near, but does not know that he has passed, till her boat reaches the new home of his father the next day, and she hears that he has gone to the far West, on a trapping expedition. Not disheartened, she sets off after him the succeeding day, and follows him, always too late to overtake him, even to the base of the Ozark mountains. So passes her whole life, in a fruitless search for her lost lover. She goes everywhere: to the shores of Lake Huron, down the St. Lawrence, to the Moravian Mission—"in cities, in fields, in the noisy camps and battle fields of the army!" At length in her old age she lands, from the troubled sea, at Philadelphia. "Pleased with the Thee and the Thou of the Quakers," she remains there, and joins the Sisters of Mercy, whose duty it is to visit the sick. Finally, in the time of the yellow fever, she sees among the dying at the hospital an old man with thin locks; she utters such a cry of anguish that "the dying start up from their pillows:" it is Gabriel! He just recognizes her, and then the light of his eyes suddenly sinks into darkness, "as when a lamp is blown out by a gust of wind at a casement." She bows her head; the long agony is over now, and the story ends with her saying, "Father, I thank thee!"—an ejaculation in which, for reasons perfectly clear to ourself, and which we hope to make so to the reader, we could not refrain from heartily joining.

In the first place, the author has chosen to write this tale, not in any usual or natural form of English verse, but in Latin hexameter, or a form intended to resemble it, and without rhyme. The English muse is boldly invoked to permit him to sing (page 90; he has the grace not to request her aid) in lines which are the counterparts of

"*Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.*"

The consequence is, that each line is by itself, and rushes down with a doleful decadence that in a short time carries the reader's courage along with it. Knowing, as Mr. Longfellow of course does, the fate of all

similar attempts, it is strange that he should have had the hardihood to have made another. But it is still stranger that one who has so exquisite an ear for the melody of verse, considered by itself, should be so little able to distinguish its propriety considered in connection with a subject, and as aiding to embody and carry out harmoniously a particular imaginative hue. "Nothing can permanently please which does not contain in itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise:"—the reader will remember that we italicized this sentence in the definition of a poem; it was that we might use it here. We cannot see why this tale should have been written in this measure; there is no consonance between the form and the substance of the narrative. But to show this, let us quote a passage as a specimen. We will take the description of the heroine:—

"Somewhat apart from the village, and nearer the Basin of Minas,
Benedict Bellefontaine, the wealthiest farmer of Grand-Pré,
Dwelt on his goodly acres; and with him, directing his household,
Gentle *Evangeline* lived, his child, and the pride of the village.
Stalworth and stately in form was the man of seventy winters;
Hearty and hale was he, as an oak that is covered with snow-flakes;
White as the snow were his locks, and his cheeks as brown as the oak-leaves.
Fair was she to behold, that maiden of seventeen summers.
Black were her eyes as the berry that grows on the thorn by the way-side,
Black, yet how softly they gleamed beneath the brown shade of her tresses!
Sweet was her breath as the breath of kine that feed in the meadows.
When in the harvest heat she bore to the reapers at noontide
Flagons of home-brewed ale, ah! fair is sooth was the maiden.
Fairer was she when, on Sunday morn, while the bell from its turret
Sprinkled with holy sounds the air, as the priest with his hyssop
Sprinkles the congregation, and scatters blessings upon them,
Down the long street she passed, with her chaplet of beads and her missal,
Wearing her Norman cap, and her kirtle of blue, and the ear-rings,
Brought in the olden time from France, and since, as an heirloom,

Handed down from mother to child, through long generations.
But a celestial brightness—a more ethereal beauty—
Shone on her face and encircled her form, when, after confession,
Homeward serenely she walked with God's benediction upon her.
When she had passed, it seemed like the ceasing of exquisite music."

Is this natural poetry? Does the narrative *require* these "dying falls?" We answer, no; the measure jars upon us; it is as though we were reading intense prose before a slowly nodding China mandarin. The face falls at the end of every line. Where was the necessity for choosing such a form? It cannot be that the idea of its appropriateness rose up spontaneously in the author's mind on his first conceiving the piece, and that he used it because he *felt it to be the best*; at least it is to be hoped it did not. That motion which Coleridge calls the life of poetry, is here a very melancholy life indeed. It is a "body of this death." Was it because it was a new form, and the author wished to show that "some things could be done as well as others?" Then he should not have attempted it for three reasons: *first*, the motive is unworthy of a poet; *secondly*, the same thing or others very like had been tried before a hundred times, and it is evident to any student that it has never succeeded, because it does not accord with the structure of our language; and, *thirdly*, no one has a right to try such novelties without being, like Collins in his Ode to Evening, successful. Was it because the old forms were exhausted? How much richer would be an imitation, were it necessary to make such, of the melody of *Comus*, than such a monotonous tune as this! We have tried all ways of reading it, now minding accents and pauses, now reading it as prose; but it is neither one thing nor the other, and whether as prose or verse is equally cold, affected and unnatural. The whole book did not accustom us to it; and from its growing more and more tedious till the end, we do not believe another would, twice as bulky.

But it may be urged, *Evangeline* is in a walk of art to which strictness of criticism should not be applied. It is not attempted to make the characters natural, but only

to make them in harmony with each other. It is raised very high into the poetic region ; and the mind which approaches it must for the nonce lay aside common sense and put on spectacles which turn all things to gold. To appreciate such constancy as Evangeline's, one must be very refined indeed. The whole work, in short, is so *fine* that it required these awkward inclined planes of lines, that perpetually carry the reader down—and down—and down—a—in order to make it sufficiently remote and strange. It is a painting on glass, and has laws of its own. The attempt is not to idealize, but to create.

So far as such opinions recognize the propriety of works of art in which the fancy shall give the whole a delicate and peculiar hue, their justice must be admitted, of course. We suffer ourselves to be pleased with transparencies around lamps ; we see landscapes in the frost pictures on windows ; there are innumerable golden regions above the sunset, and miniatures of them in the glowing coals ; nay, faces of angels and devils peep out upon us even from the papered walls. Whatever the fancy permits will come into poetry. There may be good poems as literal as the Tales of the Hall, and others equally good, as fanciful as the Faery Queen. But in one, as much as in the other, the form and *motion* should be, because it must be, created by, and conform with, and belong to, and be a part of the essence of, the whole. For example, take the Ancient Mariner : nothing is more common than the ballad form ; but that form was never so written before. The poetry of the piece takes that old measure and moulds it anew into an eloquent motion peculiar to itself, harmonizing with and heightening its general effect. The verse of the poem is as original as any element of it ; but how clearly did it grow to be what it is, under the guidance of the poet of course, yet still *as of necessity*.

But in *Evangeline* there is no such concinnity. The verse stands out like an awkward declaimer, or a bashful school-boy rehearsing young Norval, or Hohen Linden. It has no connection with the poetry ; the two are in the condition of a couple divorced *a mensa et thoro*, but not *a vinculo matrimonii* ; they are mingled but not combined ; in mixtion, not in solution. We are not called upon to be first

affected with the tale as we proceed, and left to admire at its elegance, but are asked to admire first, and to be affected secondarily. The difference is just this, that the author is affected and not we. He is determined to be fine, and consequently determinately so. "O wad some power the giftie gie us !"—and most especially in writing poetry, for there it is impossible to hide the secret purpose. When the spirit of the Muse is upon us, and we must prophecy ; when the whole soul is compelled by an angel with a fiery sword ; when, as Milton saith, the poet is "soaring in the high region of his fancy, with his garland and singing robes about him ;" then these over-niceties do not appear, or if they do, they are at once pardoned and passed by. When the hot simoom of the IMAGINATION sweeps across the burning wastes of the soul, the birds and beasts which people it fly before the blast, and the silly young estriches of our vanity run till they fall and die ; but when the strong north wind of the WILL sweeps along with only a great cloud of dust, the silly creatures stick their heads in the sand and abide its utmost fierceness !

The idea, also, that this tale is so very fine as not to be appreciated by common minds, and is therefore exempt from common criticism ; that it is in what Mr. Willis would perhaps style a "Japonica" region of the poetic art, and only to be read after a purification, this idea which we have admitted as a supposed excuse for the uncouthness of the measure, is only admissible as such a supposition. For the characters and their motives are old and universal. The popularity of Madame Cottin's tale of the Exile of Siberia, shows how well the world understands the wealth and the depth of woman's affection. But it may be said, that though old and universal this affection is here in a highly refined form. Constancy, it may be urged, it is true, is only constancy whether clad in hoddin gray or pink satin, but that here it is clad in extremely choice raiment.

Now to this we must answer, and this conducts us to the *general style* of the piece, the clothing is not to our taste. It is not really fine, but tawdry ; not neat, but gaudy. It pains the eye for want of harmony, and for ostentatious showiness in the coloring. To read the whole book cloy

the fancy. The figures and comparisons seldom come in naturally, but are the offspring of conscious choice. The poet has always left him a "conceit, a miserable conceit." There is not a simile in the piece resembling in its essence either of the three that Burns throws in with a single dash in Tam O'Shanter; not one that makes the picture burst upon the eye, and thrills the heart with its imaginative sympathy. But the similes in Milton, it may be said, which he strews in "thick as the leaves in Vallombrosa," are consciously chosen. Not so; though there are minds to whom they must always so appear, not being able to lift themselves up to the height of his greatness.

The comparison in the extract quoted—"Sweet was her breath as the breath of kine that feed in the meadows," is neither suggested nor suggestive, neither natural nor well chosen, but forced, unapt and *not new*. To one who never had any agricultural experience, it may seem elegant; possibly to such an one it would come naturally; but to our apprehension it is a simile which is not only strained, but degrades rather than exalts. The last line in the extract is another forced simile: "When she had passed, it seemed like the ceasing of exquisite music." But this is so pretty, that one cannot choose but pardon it. The author is not always so successful. Thus:—

"Silently one by one, in the infinite meadows of heaven,
Blossomed the lovely stars, the forget-me-nots of the angels."

This is altogether *too* fine. It is sickening. We cannot away with it. A writer who feeds American boarding-school misses with such *bon-bons*, is fair subject for mirth. He ought to be laughed out of the folly. Next thing his bust will appear in some barber's window in Broadway—if indeed the ideal is not there already. One would think this should suffice for the stars in one poem; but no:—

"Over her head the stars, the thoughts of God in the heavens!"

This is *naughty*: we fear we shall never meet Mr. Longfellow in the place he mentions, if he allows himself to use such expressions.

Sometimes he is very ingenious, so much

so, that it becomes a pleasure to anatomize his good things. Indeed, in this sense, the poem would not be so tedious, were we not called upon to feel at the same time for the grief of the unfortunate lovers. But there is just the difficulty. How one could elaborate so affecting a plot, in so minutely cool and trifling a manner, exercising his ingenuity on an unusual metre, and in discovering all sorts of pretty comparisons and expressions, passes comprehension. When, for example, his heroine grows old, he says:—

"Then there appeared and spread faint streaks
of gray on her forehead,
Dawn of another life, that broke o'er her earthly
horizon,
As in the eastern sky the first faint streaks of
the morning."

The comparison of the turning gray of the hair to the dawn of the morning, has a pleasing fancifulness, but is certainly as remote from real pathos, as likening a boiled lobster to the same phenomenon.* The poet does not *paint* by such similes; they distract from his picture and attract to his ingenuity. The cool *wit* (using the word in its old acceptation) so predominates over the *imagination*, as to cause that faculty to dwindle into *affectation*. If the reader is moved by such writing, it is of his own accord, and out of the disposition of his nature to supply emotion where it is so evidently wanting. We can fancy that one should feel in reading many passages like this, and, indeed, the whole piece, that the writer is giving out in a calm and unnatural monotonous chant, feelings too deep to be allowed egress in spontaneous eloquence; just as many must remember to have felt, when it was common for college students to imitate the impressive oddity of Mr. Emerson's manner, at hearing some unfortunate, meek-eyed, muddled-brained young gentlemen "commune;" or as they would, perhaps, have phrased it, "let the within flow out into the universal." There is a perfect analogy between this poem and its style, and between their thinking and conversation; and it might be added, that the

* How much nearer the language of emotion is "the *milky* head of reverend Priam," in the rhetorical passage the first player recites in Hamlet.

poetry and the thinking are both equidistant from the high and the true. For what degree of vital heat can be felt to exist in a style which gives birth to such flowers of rhetoric, as those we are quoting?—

“Life had long been astir in the village, and clamorous labor
Knocked with its hundred hands at the golden gates of the morning.”

This is not lavender, mint, or marjoram, “flowers of middle summer;” but is more like rosemary and rue, that keep “seeming and savor” all winter; rather it is a lichen, that might grow on an iceberg.

“She saw serenely the moon pass
Forth from the folds of a cloud, and one star follow her footsteps,
As out of Abraham’s tent young Ishmael wandered with Hagar!”

The exclamation point is not ours; it is so in the original, and ends a chapter. The reader can attach to it no other legitimate significance, than as indicating the poet’s astonishment at his own conception.

But he is very fond of comparisons from Scripture:—

“The trumpet flower and the grape-vine
Hung their ladder of ropes aloft like the ladder of Jacob,
On whose pendulous stairs the angels ascending, descending,
Were swift humming birds that flitted from blossom to blossom.”

Have the old painters, did Rembrandt, represent Jacob’s Dream with a rope ladder? The image, to our fancy, is as strange as the likeness of humming birds to angels. Jacob’s ladder on Mount Washington, must surely be more like the original.

“Wild with the winds of September
Wrestled the trees of the forest, as Jacob of old with the angel.”

The *trees* collectively could not have wrestled like *Jacob*, though any one of them might have been said to do so with perfect propriety. We observe the same slight inaccuracy in another place:—

“Their souls with devotion translated,
Rose on the ardor of prayer, like Elijah ascending to heaven.”

But here is a Scripture simile from the part of the poem where the reader is asked to be most moved. Evangeline has at last discovered her long-lost Gabriel among the sick in the hospital:—

“Hot and red on his lips still burned the flush of the fever,
As if life, like the Hebrew, with blood had besprinkled its portals,
That the Angel of Death might see the sign and pass over.”

This is a temperance in passion, not acquired or begotten, but innate and “from the purpose.” One would suppose that the redness of the lips were rather an invitation for Death to enter; or an indication like an auctioneer’s flag in the window of a dwelling house, that the inhabitants were moving out.

Frequently we meet with a good thing spoiled by the same coldness that permits these unpleasing extravagancies.

“On the river
Fell here and there through the branches a tremulous gleam of the moonlight,
Like the sweet thoughts of love on a darkened and devious spirit.”

This is very pretty indeed. The tremulousness sufficiently divides the one gleam into many, to make it resemble “sweet thoughts.” But see what follows:—

“Nearer and round about her, the manifold flowers of the garden
Poured out their souls in odors, that were their prayers and confessions
Unto the night, as it went its way, like a silent Carthusian.”

If this had stopped with “odors,” it would have been well; had it ended with “night,” it would have been perhaps half as good; as it is, the whole is bad. The little kitten of a thought is pinched and pinched till it mews horribly. Let us leave it and pass to another:—

“Circles and sails aloft, on pinions majestic, the vulture,
Like the implacable soul of a chieftain slaughtered in battle.”

So far would have been well, but—

“By invisible stairs ascending and scaling the heavens.”

Now the motion of a high soaring vulture, though it be like going up circular stairs in respect that it goes round and round, yet in respect that it is a smooth equable motion, it is very unlike going up stairs. Why an *implacable* soul should go to heaven at any rate, we find no sufficient reason, unless it be to fill out the metre of a very rough line; but perchance Mr. Schoolcraft's *Algie Researches* might furnish one: we observe so many instances of minute memory of little particulars gleaned out of books of travel and thrust in *for their own sake*, that we are in constant danger of exposing our ignorance. Possibly there may be some superstition among the Indians—whom the author calls, but without giving any note for the authority, "the scattered tribes of Ishmael's children"—to the effect that implacable souls go to heaven, and up circular stairs.

Where a simile occurs which is really expressive, it looks as if it had been laid away in a note-book and copied out for the occasion; thus:—Evangeline beheld the priest's face

"without either thought or emotion,
E'en as the face of a clock from which the
hands have been taken."

This would not be out of place in pleasant prose description: it occurs in what is intended to be a very serious passage. A little on the priest attempted to speak;

"but his heart was full, and
his accents
Faltered and paused on his lips, as the feet of a
child on a threshold,
Hushed by the scene he beholds, and the awful
presence of sorrow."

But how shall such a comparison as the following be classified?—The Notary has told Evangeline's father a story, which does not convince him, any more than it will the reader, but it puzzles him, so that he stood like a man who fain would speak but findeth no language;

"And all his thoughts congealed into lines on
his face, as the vapors
Freeze in fantastic shapes on the window
panes in the winter."

It is sufficient to add to a list of such things, which might be extended to more

than equal in number the pages of the poem, a few which are better:—

"In the dead of the night she heard the *whispering* rain fall
Loud on the withered leaves of the sycamore
tree by the window."

"The tire of the cart-wheel
Lay like a *fiery snake* coiled round in a circle
of cinders."

"Oft on sledges in winter, as swift as *the swoop*
of the eagle,
Down the hill-side bounding they glided away
o'er the meadows."

"Blown by the blast of fate like a *dead leaf* over
the desert."

These have as much naturalness and truth as any of their kind in the piece. But they are not very remarkable. Indeed, it may be observed of all this sort of writing, that where it is not strained it is common. Like singers who force their voices, the authors become incapable of sustaining a full, vigorous tone.

The description of the heroine already given to show the effect of the verse, the doleful hexameters, will serve to show also the general tone of the *style* and the level of the *thought* and *sentiment*. So far as it is melodious and flowing it is pleasing, but with all its labored similes and studied common-place epithets, it fails to flash the picture upon the mind's eye with that imaginative power which is the soul of high descriptive poetry. We are told that Evangeline's father was "stalworth and stately," and "hearty and hale as an oak that is covered with snow flakes:"

"White as the snow were his locks, and his
cheeks as brown as the oak leaves."

Does this comparison bring into the vision at once and irresistibly a clear image? On the contrary, the reader must first fancy an oak tree in winter, and consider wherein it resembles a stout old farmer, and then fall back upon the epithets, which are certainly not the most novel in the world. Stalworth, stately, and the like, have been used before—several times; perhaps they might be found in Mr. James's novels.

The maiden was "fair;" she had "black eyes" that gleamed softly beneath the brown shade of her tresses; she was particularly fair when at noontide she carried

ale to the reapers ; (at that time of day she would have seemed fairer to the reapers had she, if we may write a hexameter,

Stood in the door of the kitchen and blown a tin horn for the dinner ;)

fairer still was she when she went to church, where the bell sprinkled the air with holy sounds as the priest sprinkled the congregation with hyssop ; fairest of all, celestially so, when she walked homeward serenely with God's benediction upon her. All this does not make us *see* her. "Serenely," it is true, is a good phrase ; it brings an indistinct impression of a sweet young lady walking home from church, and thus affects the ear poetically. But taking the whole together as it stands, and how must Evangeline impress any fancy which is peopled with the beautiful forms of our elder English poets, and our best novelists, with the Shakspeare's ladies and Walter Scott's ? Is she a worthy person to be introduced into such company ? They would be ashamed of so insipid a creature ; Perdita would never endure such a country maid. For with all her graces and different degrees of fairness, there is nothing of her but a name, and a faint impression, not of feminine characterlessness, but of *softness*. There is no soul in her. For seventeen she is so childish as to be silly. What is told about her is told *in such a way*, that while we forget the particulars there is nothing left that is general.

This is perhaps because she is so very fine and delicate a creature that critics cannot understand or lift themselves up to the exaltation of her refinement. But critics can bear the description of Belphebe. It is not the lusciousness of the imagery that offends in *Evangeline*. It is simply the absence of the "unifying power," that fuses all into one image, that illumines the creations of the fancy with a steady intense gleam. How delightful is the first introduction of Una :—

"A lovely lady rode him fair beside,
Upon a lowly ass more white than snow ;
Yet she much whiter, but the same did hide
Under a veil that wimpled was full low,
And over all a black stole she did throw,
As one that *inly mourn'd* : so was she sad,
And heavy sat upon her palfrey slow ;
Seemed in her heart some hidden care she had,
And by her in a line a milk-white lamb she led."

In truth a most lovely lady ! "*As one that inly mourned*"—who can read it without pitying her ? Here is no oak tree, kine breath, or hyssop sprinkling comparison ; the poet is working in the glow of thought and emotion ; he is lost in the gentle music of his song ; he is not endeavoring to excite admiration, but to communicate the vision and the dream which his rapt eyes behold. Observe how incongruously, like the couplet in Goldsmith's *Elegy*, the last line follows its predecessor. Yet in reading the *Faery Queen*, one never notices such things as blemishes ; the level of the song admits them, and the fancy is kept too busy to mind them.

"Rapt with the rage of mine own ravished thoughts,
Through contemplation of those goodly sights
And glorious images in heaven wrought,
Whose wondrous beauty, breathing sweet delights,
Do kindle love in high conceited sprites,
I fain to tell the things that I behold,
But feel my wish to fail, and tongue to fold."
Spenser's Hymn of Heavenly Beauty.

But in *Evangeline* one is obliged to notice every line. He is not permitted to lose his attention in the story, in the pictures, in the character, the thought, or emotion. The writer, with his sweet sentences, his pile-driving hexameters, his strained similes and over-nice conceits, is ever directly before him, and whatever of warmth and beauty the kind reader is willing to behold, he must perceive through a cold distorting fog of artificiality. There is no character-drawing in the piece ; the hero and heroine are not alive. We shudder at the possible mournfulness of the story, but not at its actual.

"Fairest of all the maids was *Evangeline*,
Benedict's daughter !
Noblest of all youths was Gabriel, son of the
blacksmith !"

Upon what pitch or poetic ground-color was it supposed possible to work in such a consciously affected style, such "make believe good children" kind of thought and sentiment as appears in the passage which this Miltonic echo concludes ? Or what class of readers were supposed capable of relishing a work which should abound in passages like the following—baby-talk forced into a canter :—

" Bent like a laboring oar, that toils in the surf
of the ocean,
Bent, but not broken, by age was the form of
the notary public;
Shocks of yellow hair like the silken floss of
the maize hung
Over his shoulders; his forehead was high;
and glasses with horn bows
Sat astride on his nose with a look of wisdom
supernal.
Father of twenty children was he, and more
than a hundred
Children's children rode on his knee, and heard
his great watch tick."

This was intended probably to be a little pleasant touch of simple nature; but it is not. It is mere puerility. The painful obviousness of the intent is as fatal to humor as to pathos. Both need the *ars celare artem*, which is here entirely wanting. The last line is so plainly the work of a cold design, that it renders what might otherwise assist in bringing out a domestic picture seem purely goodyish. It would be a pretty thought for Dickens, in some passage where it would first strike the fancy as funny; but here, especially at the beginning of a chapter, all the pleasure that should be derived from the nicety or novelty of the observation is utterly lost. It is belittling one's self to write or read such stuff:—

" There from his station aloft, at the head of the table, the herdsman
Poured forth his heart and his wine together in
endless profusion.
Lighting his pipe, that was filled with sweet
Natchitoches tobacco."

Whoever has observed a Tilly Slowboy with a wondering baby on her knee, which she is seesawing to and fro, and amusing with some great story all about nothing, must have experienced the feeling which this sort of writing cannot but excite. Suppose Tilly is entertaining her charge with a history of the war; she chants hexameters without knowing it, merely to chime with the motion of her knees:—

" President Polk is the crossdest old man that
ever was heard of,
Fighting and killing is just what he likes and
he cuts people's heads off
When they don't mind him, like aunty for tea-
table slicing the bread; and
General Scott he went away off to conquer the
Mex'cans,

And he had a great sword, O! ever so long,
and he rode a stout war-horse—
Rode a horse that probably cost him I don't
know how many dollars;
And his epaulettes, my! dear me! they shined
like—*anything shiny*,
And in his cap were feathers enough to stuff
out a bolster—
But when he come to the city, says he, 'I must
put in a new one,'
And he did it—"

But no parody could be made colder and more remote from true poetic eloquence than the style of *Evangeline*. Nor would it be very easy to write so long a piece, intended to be so affecting, with so little manly thinking.

What shall be said of such an incident as this, and the advice which follows it: When *Evangeline* and Father Felician are going down the Mississippi in a cumbrous boat, they are one night moored under the boughs of Wachita willows. That very night, under the other bank of the river, a swift boat with Gabriel on board passes upward. The river being there something less than a mile wide, *Evangeline* feels by some mesmeric attraction that her lover is near, and tells the father so, at the same time adding that it is only her fancy, and that he will not probably understand her:

" But made answer the reverend man, and he
smiled as he answered,"—

(But should smile why the reverend man, we confess we do not perceive here.)

" Daughter, thy words are not idle; nor are they
to me without meaning.
Feeling is deep and still; and the word that floats
on the surface
Is as the tossing buoy, that betrays where the
anchor is hidden.
Therefore trust to thy heart, and to what the
world calls illusions."

Most profound Father! so profound that a question arises as to his meaning. If it would please the poor girl to think that her Gabriel was near because she felt so, that was very well; but one does not see how her feeling could have any influence on the actual fact. She might have felt so had he not been passing, and the father's advice would have been just as pertinent; indeed, for aught he knew, he might be a thousand miles away: If the

father really meant to say that her feeling was to the actual fact what the buoy is to the anchor, he is talking nonsense ; if he meant, as he says, that her words were to her feelings what the buoy is to the anchor, and that *therefore* she should trust to illusions, he is talking worse nonsense. There is no *sequitur*. We can understand Defoe's feeling that he was urged by an overruling impulse to do a particular thing, and his advice in such cases to follow the supernatural guidance ; Dr. Johnson's leaping over posts in London streets because he felt that if he could or did, something would turn out well, is no absurdity to those who are particular to see the new moon over the right shoulder ; the sudden shooting forward of the memory by which for an instant the present and new seems old and familiar, all the occult dreams of poets and musicians, are easy to understand ; but this passage is not. It does not mean anything. Fortunately, the poem being almost wholly narrative, those whose duty it is to criticise it are spared the necessity of remarking upon much of such thinking—thinking which it would never be necessary to notice with severity, did it not appear under a form of much pretension.

If we take the general thought of the piece aside from what is wasted in such nonsense as this, and in dressing what should have been an affecting story in such a masquerading costume that it is ridiculous ; that is to say, if we consider the bare plot and the naked thread of the description, there is nothing in them to be condemned. This is but negative praise, yet it is all they deserve. The story, in decent garb, might have told very well in the monthly magazines. Indeed, it is of a kind which would have borne quite a flowery style, and is perhaps sufficiently poetic for verse—reasonable verse, we mean, for no bard on earth could drag it or any other story safely over the quaking boggy syrtis of these hexameters. The characters, though faintly and unartistically drawn, are yet not wholly unnatural. The hero and the heroine love and wish to be together, as all true lovers should and must—Madame Sand's to the contrary notwithstanding. They have no particular life, being merely impossible combinations of universal qualities ; but all the best side

of what they are, they are in a very proper and sensible way. Gabriel is simply a manly man, Evangeline a womanly woman, and each is thus not by a superior development but by a common one. They are so, we mean, because the poet tells us *that they are so*, and ascribes to them *common* traits which are universal, and *nothing else*. There is a wide difference between the great universal and the every day. If Evangeline were really the great "historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical," which it is sufficiently apparent from internal evidence it was intended to be, the hero and heroine would have been something more than a stout fellow and a handsome girl ; they would have been all that they are and more beside, without being any the less types of humanity. The great names of epic story are by no means such fanciful good creatures. They are not so soft, but are more delicate. Their thoughts and emotions are no less un-individual, but are larger and deeper. They open to us more of the experience of life. Their joy is an exceeding great joy ; in their sorrow the "waters come in unto their souls."

Or not to rank the piece with those with which its style and design provoke a comparison—if it be looked upon (that is) not as an artificial attempt to accomplish what it has not accomplished, and what, if it had, would not have been worth accomplishing, but simply as a pastoral poem of such a length—it is not of merit to deserve a place among the best compositions of that kind in the English language. How infinitely more poetic is any one of Crabbe's Tales ? or that most exquisite one of Wordsworth, "Michael," the broken-hearted father, whose unfinished sheepfold still remains

"Beside the boisterous brook of Green-head
Ghyll."

For these are *something*. They are in a legitimate walk of art. They idealize the actual without departing from it. Evangeline mingles the possible with the impossible, till it ends in the incredible. The heroine is a farmer's daughter, and has a heifer of her own, and is not ashamed to "do the milking ;" she has woven an "ample and high" clothes-press, with

"spacious shelves" full of linen and woolen stuffs, which are the precious *dower* she is to bring to her *husband* in marriage,

"Better than flocks and Lerds, being proofs of her skill as a housewife."

Can the reader suppose for a moment, that a sonsie lass like this ever "saw serenely the moon pass," etc. ? Is she a young lady likely to have been troubled with such a mesmeric fancy as that which leads the good Father Felician to philosophize so profoundly ? Of course not. She would have talked and thought differently. She might have had just as deep an affection, just as much constancy, delicacy and sensitiveness as are attempted to be ascribed to her, but she would have expressed herself quite otherwise. Rich people have the same hearts as poor people, but they do not talk in the same way ; and it takes a much larger experience than a young lady seventeen years old, betrothed to the son of a blacksmith; can be supposed to have had, to enable one in the low plains of poverty to assume the tone of his fellows who walk on the gilded summits of affluence. Characters should be consistent with themselves. If cottage damsels are to be depicted with the sentiments of ladies, we should see nothing of rural life but jessamines and honey-suckles. The whole should be invested with a *harmonizing imaginative atmosphere*. When we have "happy peasantry" scenes upon the stage, Mr. Barry has the Alpine mountains put into the slides, and over these places such a sky as was never seen elsewhere since the second day of Creation. We cannot be, at the same time, awake and dreaming, in spite of Bunyan's promise.

This great fault of *Evangeline*, its *want of keeping*, more even than all its faults of style, forces us to deny it merit as a work of the IMAGINATION. It is radically defective as a great poem, in that it lacks a pervading tone. It blends extremes of hue as wide apart as those of the pastorals of Phillips and Wordsworth's Michael. It is too unreal to be real, and too real to be unreal. Like a familiar landscape, done in water colors by a young lady, we recognize just enough to be most intensely aware of the unlikeness. The characters remind one of Punch's designs of Bandits and Scotch Highlanders, worked by boarding-school misses in Berlin wool. The whole piece ought to rank as a work of art with those curious specimens of carving exhibited in museums. It is a series of cubes and spheres and cones in open spaces, cut out of a single piece of soft wood, not for the purpose of producing an effect by its symmetry or beauty of proportion, but to make us admire at the ingenuity of the carver. Or it is like a wonderful piece of inlaid work, which must have cost immense toil, but which, being irregular and formless, expresses nothing but its maker's patient skill. In brief, it is a most labored piece of fine writing. The words are melodiously arranged ; the incidents are pathetic ; there is much pleasing luxurious description ; the natural feelings of the lovers are, in general, correctly, though incongruously drawn ; but with all this, the vital spark is wanting. The piece does not display the depth of emotion, nor the height of rapture, necessary to a great poem. It does not burn or glow with heat, but only congeals and coldly glitters. G. W. P.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 005 863 428 1



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



• 0 005 863 428 1